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Agenda items 15, 16, 19, 40, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 65, 70, 107, 117, 118, 120 and 122

The situation in the Middle East
Question of Palestine
Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba
Report of the Economic and Social Council
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields
Macroeconomic policy questions
Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and the preparation of the 2008 Review Conference
Sustainable development
Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
Globalization and interdependence
Groups of countries in special situations
Eradication of poverty and other development issues
Operational activities for development
New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance
Oceans and the law of the sea
Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations
Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009
Improving the financial situation of the United Nation
Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

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Letter dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the thirty-second annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 26 September 2008 (see annex).

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda items 15, 16, 19, 40, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 65, 70, 107, 117, 118, 120 and 122.

(*Signed*) John W. **Ashe**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of
Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group of 77

Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration adopted at the thirty-second annual meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77

New York, 26 September 2008

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China met in New York, at the United Nations Headquarters, on 26 September 2008 on the occasion of their Thirty-second Annual Meeting. The Ministers reviewed the progress of the world economy and the challenges in economic development and social progress of developing countries, and adopted the following Declaration:

1. The Ministers, after reviewing the world economic situation, recognized that while some developing countries are making progress, a majority of countries are still confronted by many shared and common problems and great challenges. The international community is challenged by multiple inter-related and mutually reinforcing crises, driven significantly by a severely unbalanced international economic system including a global food crisis, a financial crisis, an energy crisis, a climate crisis and environment crisis as well as a crisis of confidence in some international institutions.

2. In this regard, the Ministers noted with deep concern that the lack of effective implementation of the internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs remains the Achilles Heel of the UN development agenda and stressed that securing the effective and full implementation of the agreed goals and commitments must be of the highest priority. The Ministers urge development partners to demonstrate a similar alacrity in implementing their part of the commitments whether in external debt, development assistance, financing, trade, technology transfer and other areas of cooperation. Building on General Assembly resolution 60/265, the United Nations should develop an intergovernmental consensus for the establishment of effective mechanisms to review and follow up the implementation of MDGs and IADGs.

3. The Minister reaffirmed that hunger constitutes a violation of human dignity and called for urgent measures at the national, regional and international levels for its elimination. They also reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food consistent with the right to food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, so as to be able to fully develop and maintain his or her physical and mental capacities.

4. The Ministers reaffirmed that economic and social development is the centerpiece of the objectives and operational activities of the United Nations. The achievement of the IADGs including the MDGs should continue to be the over-arching framework of the development activities of the UN system. The Ministers reiterated the need to fully implement all agreed commitments from all the

major United Nations summits and conferences in the economic, social and related fields. They further emphasized the need for a strengthened global partnership for development, based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of development strategies.

5. The Ministers expressed their deep concern at the declining trend of ODA level since 2006. They observed that ODA has fallen by 5 per cent in real terms for 2006 and by a further 8.4 percent in real terms in 2007 and noted that if current trends persist, it would seriously hurt developing countries. The Ministers reiterated the significance of increased financing for development including the need to meet the long-standing target of 0.7% of GNP for ODA to developing countries and 0.2 percent of GNP to the least developed countries by 2010.

6. The Ministers stressed the need to provide ODA as a direct budgetary support and without any conditionality. International support measures should also aim at improving the quality of development aid, including its sectoral balance, with greater emphasis on building productive capacities in developing countries.

7. In addition, the Ministers recalled that the increase in ODA promised to Africa by the G8 at Gleneagles which amounted to an additional US $ 25 billion per year by 2010 has not yet materialized. They strongly recommended for much larger and sustained increases in ODA to reach the target of $50 billion increase in real terms which was the goal set at the 2005 G-8 Summit in Gleneagles.

8. The Ministers reiterated the urgent need for the international community to adopt an effective, equitable, durable and development-oriented solution to the debt problems of developing countries, particularly LDCs, including through total debt cancellation, without discrimination or conditionalities, and increased concessional financial flows.

9. The Ministers expressed their serious concern over the failure in July of the talks of the WTO Doha Round that may preclude finishing negotiations this year and considered it a serious setback for the Doha Round and called upon the developed countries to demonstrate the flexibility and the political will necessary for breaking the current impasse in the negotiations, and they reaffirmed the need to strictly adhere to the development mandate of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, the decision of the General Council of the World Trade Organization of 1 August 2004 and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration, which place development at the heart of the multilateral trading system.

10. The Ministers reiterated that a successful Doha Round is crucial for sustaining strong trade growth and making the sharing of its benefits more inclusive for developing countries. They stressed that agriculture must continue to be at the centre of the negotiations. They reiterated their call for the elimination of trade distorting subsidies by developed countries. It will provide a window for opportunities to move on agricultural trade reforms to reduce the food prices impact on many developing countries especially the poorest among them. The Ministers emphasized the need for aid for trade to strengthen trade logistics and improve developing countries competitiveness and ability to benefit from trade opportunities and also emphasized that Aid for Trade should be adequately funded

through additional and predictable resources, to ensure that the needs of all developing countries, particularly LDCs, are met.

11. The Ministers stressed the importance of facilitating the accession of all developing countries, in particular the LDCs that apply for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), without political impediments, in an expeditious and transparent manner and with full observance of the principles of special and differential treatment for developing countries.

12. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of UNCTAD 12, in particular "The Accra Accord" which reiterated UNCTAD's importance as the focal point within the UN for the integrated treatment of trade and development and the interrelated issues of finance, investment, technology and sustainable development and the need to fully implement its mandate for policy analysis and policy advice which is indispensable for forging consensus building on development.

13. The Ministers emphasized that it is essential to adopt appropriate measures to overcome the technological gap between developing and developed countries and to work towards arrangements that facilitate the process of technology transfer. In this regard, the Ministers noted with concern the restraints imposed on access to technology, especially advanced technologies and certain aspects of TRIPS which are adversely affecting the developmental needs of developing countries, particularly in sectors such as health and education.

14. The Ministers also expressed their deep concern on the increasing inequality between developed and developing countries since most developing countries have been deprived of financial investment despite the different reforms and policies they have undertaken to create a more attractive investment climate. The reform policies are often constrained by conditionalities imposed by the international Financial Institutions. There is a need for conscious policy measures to facilitate FDI to developing countries, including investment guarantee schemes favorable trade access, production and supply agreements, local processing and marketing of raw materials and commodities.

15. The Ministers expressed concern at the continued increased in the net outflow of resources from developing countries due to growing trade deficits in developed countries and capital flight. The Ministers were particularly concerned that in many cases such outflows far exceeded the development finances provided by the international community.

16. The Ministers called for a comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture to broaden and strengthen the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision making and norm setting and, to that end, stressed the importance of continuing efforts to reform the international financial architecture so as to enhance the effective participation of these countries in international decision making. They noted that, despite modest efforts, enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in the Bretton Woods Institutions remains a continuous concern, and in this regard called for further and effective progress.

17. The Ministers expressed concern over the current subprime financial and credit crisis as well as the recent financial market instability and their adverse impact on the development prospects of

developing countries, including the latter's access to crucial finance and credits. These crises require a vigorous coordinated international response to ensure that the sustained growth of the world economy and the development efforts of developing countries are not severely affected.

18. The Ministers reaffirmed the high priority that developing countries attach to the Financing for Development process as a valuable opportunity to secure support for their common vision to address the global financial and trade constraints faced by most developing countries. They welcomed the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, scheduled to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008. The Ministers urged the Review Conference to follow-up the implementation of the outcome of the first International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey and to adopt necessary measures to strengthen the review and follow-up mechanisms for the realization of the commitments made.

19. The Ministers renewed the commitment to continuing to discuss innovative mechanisms for financing for development and acknowledged the progress made in this area and the value of developing innovative sources of financing from various sources on public, private, domestic and external bases in order to increase and supplement traditional sources of financing and invited countries to consider contributing in this regard.

20. The Ministers reiterated the commitment taken in the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions to operationalize the World Solidarity Fund, and recalled the request made by the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar, from 12 to 16 June 2005, to operationalize the World Solidarity Fund and called upon donors countries, countries in a position to do so, international organizations, the private sector and individuals, to contribute to the Fund in order to enable it to start its activities and to allow it to contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, particularly poverty eradication.

21. The Ministers firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, and reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. They, therefore, called on the international community neither to recognize these measures nor apply them.

22. The Ministers reaffirmed that eradication of poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today. They reiterated the importance of developing countries determining their own food security strategies in their efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. They noted regional initiatives taken by G77 Member States in this regard, including the holding of the Presidential Summit in Managua, Nicaragua on Food, Security and Sovereignty and the African Summit in Sharm-El-Sheik.

23. The Ministers stressed that the global food, financial and energy crises, constituted a major multi-dimensional challenge for development and the achievement of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals including the Millennium Development Goals.

24. The Ministers expressed their deep concern at the sharp rise in global food prices and underline that the global food crisis poses a serious challenge to the fight against poverty and hunger, as well as to the efforts by developing countries to attain food security and achieve the objectives of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015 and other internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs. They reiterated that the global food crisis has multiple and complex causes and that its consequences requires a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained response in the short, medium, and long-term by the international community and national governments. They also emphasized the need for global mechanisms to serve as an early warning system on food security to prevent the recurrence of food crises.

25. They emphasized that achieving food security would require strengthening and revitalizing the agriculture sector in developing countries, including through the empowerment of small and medium scale farmers, technical assistance, access to and transfer of technology and exchange of knowledge and experience. They further emphasized that subsidies and other market distortions by developed countries have severely harmed the agricultural sector in developing countries, thereby limiting the ability of this key sector to contribute meaningfully to poverty eradication and sustained economic growth, food security and rural development.

26. The Ministers recognized the severity and urgency of the global food crisis. The Ministers underscored the need for the United Nations, with its universal membership, to play a leading role in addressing the crisis. They welcomed the holding of the FAO High-level Conference on "World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy" in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008. They reiterated their call upon all donors of the United Nation system to increase their assistance for developing countries, in particular least developed countries and those that are most negatively affected by high food prices. They also noted the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis, and called on the Task Force to intensively engage with the General Assembly and the ECOSOC and relevant international organizations.

27. The Ministers welcomed initiatives to convene a Special Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to the issue of poverty eradication and on food security and consider taking the issue of agriculture development and food security before the closure of its 63rd session.

28. The Ministers reiterated that developing countries should have the required policy space to formulate their development strategies in keeping with national development policies, strategies and priorities to reflect national priorities and the particular circumstances of each country.

29. The Ministers acknowledged that the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions. In this regard the Ministers reiterated that UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol remain the central multilateral framework for cooperative action to address climate change.

30. The Ministers remained deeply concerned that the developing countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS and African countries, face increased risks from the negative effects of climate change and further stressed the need to urgently address adaptation needs related to such effects.

31. The Ministers reaffirmed that responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner, with a view to avoiding adverse impact on the latter, taking into account the legitimate priority needs of developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty. They welcomed the decisions adopted during the 13th Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC held in Bali and called for urgent global action to address climate change in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. They particularly urged developed countries to undertake ambitious and enhanced commitments under the Kyoto Protocol in subsequent commitment periods. They also urged the international community to assist developing countries to address the consequences of climate change particularly through new, additional and predictable financial resources, capacity building, and access to and transfer of technology.

32. The Ministers called for the full and effective implementation of the commitments, programmes and targets contained in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and welcomed the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 62nd session to review, at its sixty-fifth session, progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States through the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation.

33. The Ministers called on the international community and the United Nations system to fully support Caribbean States in their efforts to gain international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context sustainable development, recognizing the importance of the Caribbean Sea to present and future generations and to the heritage and the continuing economic well-being and sustenance of people living in the area, and the urgent need for the countries of the region to take appropriate steps for its preservation and protection, with the support of the international community.

34. The Ministers welcomed the successful outcome of the Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-9) held in Bonn from 19 to 30 May 2008 particularly the adoption of a decision for the elaboration of a multiyear plan of action on South-South cooperation on biodiversity for development. They noted the urgent need to meet the three objectives of the Convention and their target of reducing biodiversity loss by 2010 and welcomed the decision by the COP calling for a high level special event in conjunction with the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly to mark the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

35. The Ministers recognized further the challenge posed by desertification and land degradation and resolve to support and strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa to address causes of desertification and land degradation, as well as poverty resulting from land degradation. They noted the recently adopted Ten-year Strategic Plan to make the Convention a systemic and worldwide response to global environmental issues affecting land and its ecosystems. The Ministers urged major policy interventions and commitment by the international

community in terms of prioritizing investment in land and sustainable land management, in accordance with national circumstances, so as to prevent and reverse land degradation and desertification, thereby achieving the MDG goals particularly eradicating poverty and hunger.

36. The Ministers welcomed the offer made by the Government of Brazil to host in 2012 a World Summit on Sustainable Development to review the 20-year progress achieved in the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, on 3-14 June 1992, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 26 August-4 September 2002.

37. The Ministers expressed their concern over the increased frequency and scale of natural disasters in recent years which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic and environmental consequences for countries, particularly developing countries. They called upon the international community, particularly developed countries and the relevant international organizations to increase their assistance to the affected States, including by supporting efforts towards enhancing their national and regional capacities for implementation of plans and strategies for preparedness, rapid response, recovery and development. The Ministers also reiterated that humanitarian assistance should be rendered upon the request of the affected States, and reaffirmed that in this regard the Guiding Principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance, as contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, must be respected.

38. The Ministers recognized the special needs of Africa, the only continent currently not on track to achieve the Internationally Agreed Development Goals including the Millennium Development Goals, and called for the full and timely implementation of all commitments made so as to enable African countries to enter the mainstream of the world economy.

39. The Ministers reaffirmed the special needs of and underscored the need to address the challenges faced by Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States. In this regard, the Ministers urged the international community and the UN system to address those needs and vulnerabilities and take urgent and concrete action to fulfill their commitments, through the full and effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the Almaty Programme of Action, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

40. The Ministers recognized the special challenges and needs of the Least Developed Countries particularly in the face of new and emerging challenges. The Ministers fully supported the convening of the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs, in accordance with paragraph 114 of the Brussels Programme of Action, towards the end of the current decade. The Ministers stressed that the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs will represent an important opportunity for the LDCs and their partners to critically review past performance, especially in areas of failures and weak implementation, and develop a new common action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade for effectively assisting the LDCs in their development efforts in a growingly complex and changing circumstances.

41. The Ministers also reaffirmed the special needs and challenges faced by countries emerging from conflicts. In this regard, the Ministers urged the international community and the UN system to address these needs and challenges and take urgent and concrete action in the area of financial assistance and technical support and infrastructure development, in order to achieve the internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs.

42. The Ministers also called for continued support for the development efforts of low-income developing countries in addressing their social, economic and developmental needs including through the provision of technical, financial and other forms of assistance, promotion of and strengthening of partnerships and cooperation arrangements at all levels.

43. The Ministers called for continued support for the development efforts of middle-income developing countries, including through targeted and substantial technical assistance, and the promotion of new partnerships and cooperation arrangements, including bilateral arrangements, as well as by working in competent multilateral, regional and international fora, in support of national development strategies. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the Third International Ministerial Conference on Developmental Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries that took place in Windhoek, Namibia, from 4 to 6 August 2008.

44. The Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Government of the Philippines to host the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development to be held in Manila in October 2008 and strongly urged all countries to strengthen the protection of the human rights of all migrants and reiterated their determination to continue to address the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, transit and destination.

45. The Ministers expressed concern over rapid urbanization and reaffirmed their commitment to consider an enhanced approach to achieving the Cities Without Slums Initiative mentioned in the United Nations Millennium Declaration by upgrading existing slums, improving access to water and sanitation and creating policies and programmes, according to national circumstances, to forestall the growth of future slums, and in this regard invite the international donor community and multilateral and regional development banks to support the efforts of developing countries, inter alia, through increased voluntary financial assistance.

46. The Ministers reaffirmed their strong support to the United Nations, and to all collective efforts aiming at enhancing its ability to fully implement its mandates and to ensure the effective delivery of all its programmes, in particular in the social and economic development field. The Ministers firmly believed that the legitimacy and viability of any reform measures depended ultimately on the approval of Member States of the United Nations. The Ministers emphasized that measures to reform of the United Nations should respond to the unique intergovernmental, multilateral and international character of the United Nations.

47. The Ministers recognized the need, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to abide by the principles of proper management of public affairs and public property, fairness, responsibility and equality before the law and the need to safeguard integrity and to foster a

culture of transparency, accountability and rejection of corruption, and in this regard, call for international cooperation and technical assistance, inter alia, through the United Nations system, in support of national, sub regional and regional efforts to prevent and combat corrupt practices and the transfer of assets of illicit origin, consistent with the principles of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and also invited the Member States to work on the identification and tracing of financial flows linked to corruption, the freezing or seizing of assets, derived from corruption and the return of such assets, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and encourages the promotion of human and institutional capacity-building in this regard.

48. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of operational activities, through which the General Assembly establishes key system wide policy orientation for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the TCPR should determine the course of action for UN operational activities and should not be superseded or pre-empted by other processes.

49. The Ministers firmly rejected attempts to politicize the operational activities for development of the UN system and underscored the importance of the principles of neutrality and impartiality in the provision of development assistance.

50. The Ministers affirmed that the sovereign equality of Member States, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, must be respected, including throughout the reform processes, irrespective of the contributions that individual Member States make to the budget of the Organization. Governance arrangements and decision making process exercised through the General Assembly, its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies are the sole responsibility of the Member States in accordance with the United Nations Charter. They upheld the role of the Member States, through the relevant main committees of the General Assembly, in the consideration of budgetary and administrative matters.

51. The Ministers reaffirmed the principle of "capacity to pay" as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and thus rejected the establishment of artificial ceilings during the elaboration of the scale of assessments.

52. The Ministers strongly supported the oversight role performed by the General Assembly, as well as its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, in the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

53. The Ministers reaffirmed that the financial stability of the United Nations should not be jeopardized by arbitrary measures. The Ministers stressed that any efforts to use financial contributions to push for the adoption of certain proposals are counterproductive and violate the obligations of the Member States to provide resources for the Organization, as enshrined in its Charter, and in accordance with the principle of capacity to pay.

54. The Ministers strongly reaffirmed the legal obligation of all member states to bear the financial expenses of the UN, in accordance with the Charter, and urged all member states to pay

assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions. They also stressed that the special and genuine difficulties faced by some developing countries that prevent them from meeting temporarily their financial obligations should be fully taken into account and that the decisions of the General Assembly on the agenda item "Scale of assessments" must be responsive to such difficulties.

55. The Ministers believe that the strengthening of the United Nations and its role in international cooperation for development is essential to respond to current and future challenges and opportunities emanating from the process of globalization. They are of the view that the United Nations needs to improve its capabilities and capacities and, in this regard, they welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the development pillar of the whole organization.

56. The Ministers stressed the importance of ensuring that the Secretariat meets the highest standards of accountability, transparency, integrity and ethical conduct. The Ministers, therefore, urged the Secretary-General as a matter of priority to define accountability in the Organization, establish clear accountability mechanisms to the General Assembly, and proposed parameters for the application of accountability and instruments for its rigorous enforcement.

57. The Ministers expressed concern at the inadequate share of the developing countries in the United Nations system of procurement. They emphasized that the United Nations procurement should be on as wide a geographical basis as possible with preferential treatment for the developing countries. They further underlined that the United Nations supplier roster should be representative of the membership of the Organization.

58. The Ministers stressed the need for transparency and clear mechanisms in the recruitment process and to increase the representation of developing countries in the Secretariat, in particular at the senior level with due respect to equitable geographical distribution.

59. The Ministers reiterated their call for the immediate withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from other occupied Arab territories. They reaffirmed their support for the Middle East peace process, begun in Madrid in 1991, aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace. In this context, they also reaffirmed their support for the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at the Arab Summit in Beirut, renewed by the Arab Summits held in Riyadh in March 2007 and in Damascus in March 2008, and for all the positive efforts being exerted in this regard, including the Annapolis Conference held on 27 November 2007.

60. The Ministers condemned the ongoing Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people in Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which has resulted in the loss of civilian lives and the vast destruction of Palestinian properties, infrastructure and agricultural lands. The Ministers expressed deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip, as a result of the illegal Israeli practices, including its illegitimate construction of settlements, the wall and bypass roads and the

imposition of closures. They called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to cease immediately all illegal measures impairing the Palestinian economy, including, in particular, restrictions on the movement of persons and goods throughout, into and out of the Occupied Territory and to release all remaining tax revenues due to the Palestinian Authority and to make reparation for all damages caused to Palestinian properties, institutions and infrastructure. They reiterated their call upon the international community to continue providing much needed developmental and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people during this critical period.

61. The Ministers expressed support for the assistance in the demining efforts and cluster bombs clearance in the south of Lebanon. They further expressed their deep concern about the lack of financial resources for carrying out the remaining demining and clearance of mines and cluster munitions in the south of Lebanon, and called upon the international donors and the United Nations system to provide the appropriate and adequate financial resources to the Mine Action Coordination Center South Lebanon in order to allow it to perform its task. The Ministers reiterated their call on Israel to provide the United Nations with all the maps and information on the location of the landmines that it has planted in the south of Lebanon during its occupation and its 2006 aggression against Lebanon, as well as to provide information on the cluster bomb strike locations, which are hindering the development and rehabilitation of the south of Lebanon and preventing the agricultural exploitation of vast areas of rich agrarian land. The Ministers requested Israel to assume responsibility for the landmines laying and cluster bombs usage in the south of Lebanon and assume defraying the cost of clearance as well as providing compensation for Lebanon for any ensuing losses and for reclaiming the affected areas in the south of Lebanon for productive purposes.

62. The Ministers supported the inalienable right of Lebanon to utilize its waters in accordance with international law, in particular to ensure the social and economic needs of its population in the liberated areas and villages. They called on Israel to end its air violations of Lebanese sovereignty and other violations that severely damage the security situation which is a critical factor in promoting the economy and tourism industries.

63. The Ministers reiterated the increasing importance of South-South cooperation and called for a more energetic effort to deepen and enhance South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation, bearing in mind that such cooperation is not a substitute to North-South cooperation. The Ministers reaffirmed the role of South-South cooperation in the overall context of multilateralism as a continuing process vital to confront the challenges faced by the South. In this context, they stressed that the current international architecture for development cooperation needs to be reformulated and welcomed the convening of the High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in 2009, which should be held at the highest possible level, including the Heads of States and Governments. In this context the Ministers welcomed the adoption of the fourth cooperation framework for South-South Cooperation.

64. The Ministers welcomed the "Yamoussoukro Consensus" as the outcome of the Twelfth Session of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCC-XII), held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, from 10 to 13 June 2008, particularly the launching of the Development Platform for the South and the South Fund for

Development and Humanitarian Assistance. The Ministers commended the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for hosting this successful meeting in Yamoussoukro, and expressed their profound gratitude for the excellent arrangements, warm welcome and hospitality.

65. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the conceptual framework and the set of principles for South-South cooperation contained in the "Yamoussoukro Consensus", and in this regard stressed the following elements that should guide the Group during the preparatory process for the High-level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation:

a. South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South and must be pursued as an expression of South-South solidarity and a strategy for economic independence and self-reliance of the South based on their common objectives and solidarity;

b. South-South cooperation and its agenda must be driven by the countries of the South;

c. South-South cooperation must not be seen as a replacement for North-South cooperation. Strengthening South-South cooperation must not be a measure of coping with the receding interest of the developed world in assisting developing countries;

d. Cooperation between countries of the South must not be analyzed and evaluated using the same standards as those used for North-South relations;

e. Financial contributions from other developing countries should not be seen as Official Development Assistance from these countries to other countries of the South. These are merely expressions of solidarity and cooperation borne out of shared experiences and sympathies;

f. South-South cooperation is a development agenda based on premises, conditions and objectives that are specific to the historic and political context of developing countries and to their needs and expectations. South-South cooperation deserves its own separate and independent promotion;

g. South-South cooperation is based on a strong, genuine, broad-based partnership and solidarity;

h. South-South cooperation is based on complete equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit;

i. South-South cooperation respects national sovereignty in the context of shared responsibility;

j. South-South cooperation strives for strengthened multilateralism in the promotion of an action-oriented approach to development challenges;

k. South-South cooperation promotes the exchange of best practices and support among developing countries in the common pursuit of their broad development objectives (encompassing all aspects of international relations and not just in the traditional economic and technical areas);

l. South-South cooperation is based on the collective self-reliance of developing countries;

m. South-South cooperation seeks to enable developing countries to play a more active role in international policy and decision-making processes, in support of their efforts to achieve sustainable development;

n. The modalities and mechanisms for promoting South-South cooperation are based on bilateral, sub-regional, regional and interregional cooperation and integration as well as multilateral cooperation.

66. The Ministers recalled the request made by the heads of state and government at the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 16 June 2005 inviting "the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to take concrete measures to further strengthen the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation as a separate entity and a focal point for South-South cooperation within the United Nations system as reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution 58/220 of 23 December 2003, so as to enable it to carry out its full responsibility, in particular through mobilization of resources for the advancement of South-South cooperation including through triangular cooperation".

67. The Ministers welcomed the cooperation initiatives and the substantial financial contributions made by some G77 countries, including OPEC countries based on the solidarity and principles of friendship among States. They also welcomed initiatives on financial contributions by other G77 members in the energy sector including those related to renewable energy. In this regard, they encouraged Member States to consider supporting and engaging in mechanisms of cooperation including at relevant regional or sub-regional levels, as appropriate.

68. The Ministers welcomed the generous offer and the ongoing preparations for the Ministerial Forum on Water to be held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, from 23 to 25 February 2009.

69. The Ministers welcomed the successful outcome of the 15th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held on 29 and 30 July 2008 in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, which addressed a range of fundamental concerns and interests of developing countries.

70. The Ministers approved the Report of the Twenty-third Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for ECDC/TCDC (PGTF) contained in document G-77/AM(XX)/2008/2 and endorsed its recommendations. The Ministers commended the Chairman of the PGTF for his continued commitment and expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved by the PGTF and invited Member States to participate in the UN Pledging Conference to be held in New York on 10 November 2008.

71. The Ministers approved the Financial Statement of the ECDC Account of the Group of 77 contained in document G-77/AM(XX)/2008/4, as presented by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and urged those Member States that have not yet done so to make special efforts to pay their outstanding contributions.

72. The Ministers expressed their deep appreciation to Antigua and Barbuda for its able leadership and for the excellent work and tireless efforts as the Chair country of the Group of 77 for 2008. The Ministers also commended the efficient work and continued valuable support provided by the secretariat of the Group of 77 in New York to the Chair country and to the Member States.

73. The Ministers welcomed the election of the Republic of the Sudan to the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 for 2009.